

*R O S C O M M O N ' S*

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*C H U R C H*

*b y*

*M a r t i n D u n n e*

**In fulfillment of the requirement for the award of  
N.U.I. Certificate in Local History  
Department of Modern History**

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## PREFACE

The demand and importance of local history is growing all the time, as is the popularity of Museums. Roscommon County Museum has been open for seven years and is full of local history, but it was missing a complete history of itself, the former Roscommon Presbyterian Church. So the Local History Course offered by NUI Maynooth gave the ideal opportunity to delve into the Presbyterian Church & Congregation(s) history.

The former Presbyterian Church is now 135 years old and its exterior stone work has not changed in that time. What has changed is its use and more important, the human element of its history, the "Congregation" has gone, disappeared after a short life of just over 100 years, but not forgotten and with the help of this research, the Congregation will be revived, at least in memory.

Genealogy as with local history and Museums has grown in popularity and importance, and a great deal of the research in this dissertation involves tracing roots of the congregation, including Reverends who served here and where did their life's end up? This research will be ongoing and eventually will be exhibited permanently in the Museum and hopefully descendants of the Congregation will be found and contacted and invited to visit the Museum to see Roscommon Presbyterian Church's history, to see their history!

The title of this work was simply going to be the name of the Church, but it is important to realise that the Presbyterian Church was not the only Church in town; St. Coman's Church of Ireland (1775), Catholic Church, Market Square(1836), Methodist Chapel, Church Street(1820) and the former Catholic Church in Chapel Lane(demolished). Hence Roscommon Presbyterian Church, from my knowledge, was and still is, "Roscommon's Fifth Church".

Today the former Presbyterian Church is as important today as it was during its Church days, as a Museum all year round and as a Tourist Information Office during the summer. May this important visitor attraction survive and prosper and hopefully this little bit of local history research will contribute to this.

***Martin Dunne***  
**Editor**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Co. Roscommon Historical & Archaeological Society.

FAS - Castle Street, Roscommon.

Roscommon Tidy Towns.

Roscommon Co. Library Staff

Larry Kilcommons, Creggs, Co. Roscommon.

Mrs Hazel Dewer - Athlone Church of Ireland.

Robert Jones, Church of Ireland, Athlone.

Rev. Robert Cobain, Methodist/Presbyterian Church, Galway.

Rev. Alan Mitchel, Presbyterian Church, Boyle/Sligo.

Western Health Board - Births, Deaths & Marriages Registry Office - Roscommon.

Maureen Rendell - County Roscommon Family History Society.

Rev. A.V. Martin, Dublin & Munster Presbytery, Dublin.

Mr. Alan McMillan, The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland, Belfast.

Steven & Martina Linehan, La Chateau Restaurant, Athlone.

Rev. Stephen Simpson, Tullamore & Mountmellick Presbyterian Churches.

Robert H. Bonar, The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland, Belfast.

Canon DW Graham, St. Coman's Church, Roscommon.

Rev. Dr. A.W. Godfrey Brown, Ballycastle, Co. Antrim.

Rev. Robert Bell, Ballyclare, Co. Antrim.

William Gacquin, MA, Course Co-coordinator, CBS School, Roscommon.

## INTRODUCTION

In the 17th century the Presbyterian Church arrived in Ireland. Presbyterian tenantry from Lowland Scotland were invited to settle on the estates granted to English and Scottish landlords e.g. Parish of Clondermot in county Londonderry (1613). In 1708 there were 130 Presbyterian congregations in Ireland despite the persecution caused by the Penal Laws and the Test Act.<sup>1</sup> By 1861 ninety-six per-cent of Presbyterians were based in Ulster, while in Connacht it was only eight per-cent. Comparing this to the Catholic population, ninety-five per-cent Catholic in Connacht, while only forming fifty per-cent of the population in Ulster. In county Roscommon in 1861, 0.2 % (= 1,826) of the population was Presbyterian.(see 1861 Census appendix page1).

The Presbyterian numbers were low in Connacht because of the less influx of other nationalities, and higher in Ulster, due to major plantation by settlers from England, and particularly, Scotland. These Scottish settlers were mainly Presbyterian, creating a strong church in Ulster.<sup>2</sup> Around 1850 there was approximately 433 congregations (650,000 people), eight per-cent of the Irish population was Presbyterian. A second Evangelical Revival occurred in 1859, which spread across North America and the UK. By 1901, almost ten per-cent of the Irish population was Presbyterian.<sup>3</sup>

Why was a Presbyterian Church built in Roscommon in 1863?, a town that was small, virtually Catholic in religion, depending on farming communities for business and people locally and nationally still in the shadow of the Great Famine. During the Famine the Presbyterian Church aided the poor and the hungry, but during their help they were also trying to convert destitute Catholics to the Presbyterian faith. Even though the congregation was small it was enough to warrant the building of a small church. One can only wonder why they built opposite the Catholic Church (now Bank of Ireland)? Because it was the centre of town or possibly because they wanted the Catholics to see there was an alternative faith to follow or simply because the owner of the land was Presbyterian, one can only guess!

What is clear is the Church was built in 1863, during the second Evangelical Revival which started in 1859, and within 108 years the Church was no longer a House of God. Nationally there were to be several external political and religious forces that would affect the future of the Presbyterian Church. It is not clear why the Roscommon Presbyterian Congregation disappeared by the 1970's, but it probably was due to the fact of 'Home Rule', when Ireland was no longer part of the United Kingdom. Most Presbyterians would have considered themselves British citizens and under a native Irish Government may have felt threatened and no longer British. This resulted in many Presbyterians moving North or abroad.

There could be several external and internal (political, religious & social influences) that contributed to the disappearance of the Presbyterian congregation, but there is a record of the people involved in the Church, through baptismal, marriage, burial records, deeds, local papers or census/valuation records. All this research material can resurrect a forgotten group of people and help us reconstruct the community, who once worshipped in a small church, in Roscommon Town.

## Church News

On the **16 February 1855** Marcus McCausland and Connolly Thomas McCausland of Fruit Hill, "County Londonderry" leased a plot of ground in the town of Roscommon for a term of ninety-nine years at the rent of forty five pounds to William John McLaughlin of Castlecoote. The plot of land was obtained by the McCausland brothers in 1849 and it is part and parcel of the Town and Lands of Ardenagh which located in the Barony of Ballintobber South, Co. Roscommon and its measurement in area was five acres, one rood and three perches in Irish plantation measures. The land was bounded to the north by the premises held by Doctor Casserly on the east by the Market Place of Roscommon and the south by the premises of Mr. Michael Sherra and part of the town land Loughnane.<sup>4</sup>

In the early 1860's Athlone Presbytery appointed Rev. John Wilson to the charge of the town and district. He formed the nucleus of a congregation before he moved to another Church. Dr. John Edgar kept the congregation together and persuaded them to build a church.<sup>5</sup>

On the **7 March 1863** William John McLaughlin of Castlecoote leased a plot of land to **Reverend John Edgar** of Belfast at a cost of twenty pounds and an annual rent of ten pound for a ninety-one year term of lease. The "piece or parcel of ground in the Market Square in the Town of Roscommon containing in front next to the said Market Square forty feet or thereabouts and extending backwards from front to rear two hundred and eight feet or thereabouts to an intended lane or passage forty feet wide and containing one rood and eighteen perches statute measure or thereabouts be any of the said several admeasurements more or less bounded on the East or Front by the Market Square aforesaid on the West or rear by said intended passage on the North by Mr. Lewis's holding and on the South by other premises of the said lessor and which said hereby demised ground and premises are situate in the Town of Roscommon Town land of Ardnanagh in the Parish of Roscommon Barony of Ballintober South and County Roscommon." The deeds are signed and witnessed by a **W.H. Horner**.<sup>6</sup>

Donations for the building of the Church were made by a member of the Sherra family (one of whom was the last Governor of the nearby Old Jail).<sup>7</sup>

In July 1863 the following article on the "The new Presbyterian Church" was printed by a local paper;

"We understand that in the course of a few days the **Rev. Dr. Edgar** of Belfast, **William Todd Esq of Dublin**, and some other gentlemen also, will lay the foundation stone of the Presbyterian Church in Roscommon. The building will be a chaste simple structure and an ornament to one Market Square.- The front facing the street will be wrought lime stone with rust c-ted qu-ins and molded cap.- to be finished off with an ornamental pediment cornice and containing a large recessed door, a circular headed window on each side and a wheel window over it.

The interior is neatly fitted up to accommodate about 120 persons, the platform is placed in an arched recess in the west end of the building, the ceiling is lofty being elevated considerably above the side walls. The estimate for the building is 430 pounds.

*Mr. Wm. Maxwell* of Ballinasloe is the Architect and *Mr. George Glanville* of Ballinasloe is the builder and is expected the erection will be completed by the **first of November**.

We are indeed glad to find that our dissenting fellow townsmen are about obtaining a neat commodious place of worship and of which they are much in need.”<sup>8</sup>.

In the following month (August) the following article on the “Laying the Foundation Stone of the Presbyterian Church in Roscommon”, was printed in a local paper;

“On **Thursday last at 10 o’clock, a.m.** this interesting ceremony took place in the presence of considerable number of the respectable inhabitants of the town and vicinity, *Wm. Todd. Esq.* of Dublin, *Mrs. Todd* and *Hugh Moore. Esq.* of Cremorne, Rathgar, was also present.

*The Rev. John Edgar D.D.* read the 84th psalm. He then said that they were assembled together with the intention of erecting a house for Christian worship in connection with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Though their number in that locality was few, they belonged to that body of Christians that compose the Church of Scotland; and a large portion of the dissenters of England were Presbyterians. The Presbyterian Church in America contains the most numerous and respectable portion of its vast population. In Ireland they had over 600 ministers and congregations. In Connaught in ‘48 they had only six houses for worship and now they had twenty, besides many mission stations. They had expended many thousands pounds within the last few years in establishing industrial schools, where young females had earned good wages in embroidering muslin, &c. Their schools were under the National Board; but they took care to give a scriptural education to those whose parents approved of it. They did not commence that house in a spirit of opposition to others, but to maintain their principles, and that a few of their brethren might be enabled to worship, God according to their conscience. He was glad to perceive the great improvement this province was making in agriculture, in education and in respect for law and order - and he was persuaded that the erection of houses for Christian worship was essential to the promotion of the well-being of society. He then referred to the instances of Jacob, Joshua, and Samuel, having each set up “a stone” as a memorial of the past and a witness for the future, and expressed a hope as to the benefit to be derived by the preaching of the gospel within those walls.

*Mr. Horner* said he felt thankful that their church had commenced in earnest, to provide a place of worship for her members in this town. Their kind friend, *Dr. Edgar*, the secretary of their missions, deserved his credit of the undertaking - and they had the presence of an honored elder, *Mr. Todd* to inaugurate the movement by laying the foundation. He hoped they would soon be enabled to worship the God of their fathers in accordance with their own principles; and that the echoes within those walls would be “glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and goodwill towards men.” Arithmetic gave them no rule by which to calculate the value of immortal souls. Christian friends of other denominations would bear with him in saying that, while highly appreciating the religious opportunities hitherto afforded to him in this place, he preferred the ordinances of the Presbyterian Church, both because his judgment approves of them as scriptural, and because endeared to him by the memories of the departed and the associations of happy seasons in the house of God. *Mr. Horner* then handed *Mr. Todd* a silver trowel with the inscription “Presented by *Wm Crosbie* to *Wm. Todd, Esq.* of Dublin, on laying the foundation

stone of the Presbyterian Church,” and on presenting it said - I am now to hand you this beautiful implement so indispensable in this day’s ceremonial, I do so in the name of an old friend of yours in whose success you have always taken the deepest interest, and who, were he not present, should take the liberty to say, has followed your example in the practice of those business virtues which have made you one of the merchant princes of the land, and have gained for him also a very high place in the public esteem.

**Mr. Todd** took the trowel, and stepped down and spread the mortar; the stone was then lowered to its place, and had imbedded a bottle containing copies of the local newspapers with a description of the house, and a few pieces of coin. **Mr. Todd** said he felt convinced that the work in which they were taking a part that day was one from which they has reason to augur the happiest results. He would say to his friends of every denomination present that they cherish a spirit of kindness and forbearance towards each other. He trusted that when time itself had passed away that there would be fruit found as the consequence of the faithful testimony of the gospel in that place. He thanked his friend for the valuable implements he had received, and hoped he would have the pleasure of again visiting them when the house would be opened for divine worship.

**Dr. Edgar** then offered up prayer and the meeting separated.<sup>9</sup>

In August 1863 the following article “New Presbyterian Church In Roscommon” was printed by a local paper;

“The foundation stone of a Presbyterian Church was laid in the Market-square in this town on Thursday morning last. Amongst the strangers present on the occasion were the **Rev. Dr Edgar** of Belfast, **Hugh Moore. Esq.**, of Capel Street Dublin, **William Todd, Burns, Esq.**, (senior partner of the Firm of Todd, Burns, & Co.,) and **Mrs. Todd, &c. &c.**

After reading a suitable portion of scripture, **Dr Edgar** explained the circumstance under which a place of worship was being erected for the members of the Presbyterian Church in this neighbourhood.

The stone-in which were deposited a bottle containing documents relating to the event of the day; copies of the local papers and some coins of the realm-was laid in its place by **Mr. Todd**.

The trowel for the occasion was of silver-an exquisite specimen of its kind. On placing it in the hands of **Mr. Todd**, **Mr. Horner** addressed the gentleman as follows: - “I am now to put into your hands this beautiful implement so indispensable the ceremonial of the day. I do so in the name of an old friend of yours in whose growing success as a merchant I know that you have always taken a deep interest, and who, were he not present, I should take the liberty of saying has followed the example you have set in the practice of those business virtues that have rendered you one of the merchant princes of the land, and have gained for him also a very enviable place in the public esteem.”

The inscription on the trowel is as follows: - “Presented by **William Crosbie** to **William Todd**, Esq., of Dublin, on his laying the foundation stone of the Presbyterian Church of Roscommon. August 6th, 1863.”

**Dr Edgar** concluded the interesting services of the day by prayer for the Divine blessing on the undertaking”.<sup>10</sup> (see appendix page 7).



On **January 2nd, 1864**, in a local Roscommon paper there was an advertisement "To Be sold - Pidgeon Park", in the article is mentioned the Presbyterian Church; "One plot of ground, on which has been erected the new Presbyterian Chapel, producing a rent of 10 pounds per annum.

On the **16th February, 1867** the following article, "New Presbyterian Church, Roscommon" appeared in the local paper;

**"New Presbyterian Church, Roscommon.** - The Presbyterian families residing in Roscommon and neighbourhood have presented a memorial to the Presbytery of Athlone, praying to be formally organised as a congregation, and signifying their wish to call the Rev J Orr Scott to be their minister. - The memorial was according to the usual order referred to the general Assembly for consideration. - Boyle Gazette".<sup>11</sup>

In, **1867**, the Roscommon congregation was received under the care of the General Assembly and in **1873** was united with Creggs congregation, located just over the Galway border.<sup>12</sup>

During Rev. Samuel Lyle Harrison's ministry the Manse was built. <sup>13</sup>.

The congregation is small and very scattered, covering an area of more than 200 square miles. Owing to the long distances many of the people are unable to attend, except at communion seasons, but through the help given by the Irish Mission all are reached with ordinances.<sup>14</sup>.

Besides the regular Sabbath services, Mission stations are occupied at *Ardass* and *Castlerea*<sup>15</sup>.

In 1870 statistics show that the congregation of Roscommon is given as having twelve families.<sup>16</sup>.

On the **16th August 1871** John Burke of Cams House in Co. Roscommon leased a plot of land to *Reverend Samuel Lyle Harrison, Reverend William Hancock Horner* and *Alfred Edgar* for a term of eighty-two and half years at an annual rent of eight pounds. The above named men were "Trustees nominated by and on behalf of the Congregation in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland known by the name of the Presbyterian Congregation of Roscommon and who are herein after collectively designated as the said trustees of the other part where as a number of persons acknowledging the jurisdiction of and holding the doctrines professed by the said General assembly have formed themselves into a Congregation in connection therewith under the charge of the Presbytery of Athlone and known by the name of the Presbyterian Congregation of Roscommon aforesaid and have erected a church for the use of the said congregation and whereas the said Congregation having applied to the said John Burke for a lease of a piece of ground to be used for the erection on part there of a Manse with suitable office houses for the residence of the minister of said church for the time being".<sup>17</sup>

The "piece or parcel of ground in the town of Roscommon aforesaid containing by admeasurement one rood and two perches statute measure or thereabouts by the same more or less bounded on the North by the ground on which said Presbyterian Church is erected on the South by premises now or lately in the occupation of Mrs.

Egan on the East by the Market Square in the town of Roscommon aforesaid and on the west by ground now or lately in the occupation of Mrs. Lewis “<sup>18</sup>.

On the same date as above, the Congregation applied to the O’Connor Don to grant to the Trustee in Trust (Congregation) a lease in reversion of the ground and premises on which the Church has been erected and on which the Manse is about to be erected. An annual rent of 18 pounds up until the 1st November 1953, when the lease will be for 10,000 years. This deed was signed and witnessed by the three men previously mentioned above.<sup>19</sup>.

In 1904 there were only five families in the Roscommon Presbyterian congregation.<sup>20</sup>

On the **20th August 1956** The *Education Board of the Dublin Presbytery* of 16 St. Stephens Green in the City of Dublin, signed a contract with Edward Kilmartin which gave the board the option of surrendering the Church property on the 1st of May in any year. This option was taken up on the **1st May 1971**, by the now named *Education Board of the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster*. <sup>21</sup>.

On the **14th September 1978** the property came into ownership of Catherine G Kilmartin for life; remainder in Edward John Kilmartin, Michael Louis Kilmartin, William Joseph Kilmartin and Catherine Mary Bies nee Kilmartin.<sup>22</sup>

## THE REVERENDS

In 1863 the congregation of Creggs was organised and its first minister was Mr. Robert Kennedy who was ordained 31 March, 1863. The meeting house was opened by **Rev. Dr. John Edgar** for worship in 1863. On the 1 August, 1867, Mr. Robert Kennedy was designated to the Colonial Mission. He was replaced by **Mr. Samuel Lyle Harrison** who was ordained on 19 November, 1867.<sup>23</sup>

Earlier in the same the Presbyterian families of Roscommon tried to call Rev J Orr Scott to be their minister, but he never did for whatever reason. There are two references to a Mr. James Scott and Rev. James Scott, which could be the above gentleman (see appendix page 2)

On the 19 January, 1868, the **Rev. Dunlop Moore** carried out the first baptismal in the church, he was probably a friend of the family; the child's name was Annie Jane Redpath (see appendix page 3)<sup>24</sup>

No record can be found for Rev. Dunlop Moore, but two similar named persons, who could be him, have been found for Mr. David Dunlop and Mr. William Moore (see appendix page 2).

During Rev. Samuel Lyle Harrison's ministry he performed three baptismal ceremonies, which took place between 1871 and 1872 (see appendix page 3).<sup>25</sup>

Samuel Lyle Harrison was called five years later to Clogher, Co. Mayo, on the 5 November, 1872. He was installed on 29 January, 1873. He was described as "a preacher marked by originality and persuasiveness, and a man of kindly disposition".<sup>21</sup> On the 6 March, 1878 he was called to Dromore West and installed. He was called to Jonesboro and Castlebellingham on 17 May, 1883.<sup>22</sup> He was installed on the 29 May, 1883, a year after the two congregations had united (1882). He traveled through Meath, Louth and Armagh, ministering to scattered Presbyterian families over a wide area, and he died on 19 April, 1916.<sup>28</sup>

Rev. Samuel Lyle Harrison's son Mr. Alexander Lyle Harrison was ordained on 9 March 1909 at Rostrevor. Mr. Alexander Harrison did not stay long for on the 17 March 1914 he was called to Fortwilliam Park, Belfast.<sup>29</sup> On the 6 April he was installed, serving for twenty-seven years until ill-health compelled his retirement on 30 June 1941. He passed away on 28 January 1967. His son, Mr. Frank A.L. Harrison, is a distinguished Queen's Council in Northern Ireland.<sup>30</sup>

Rev. Samuel Lyle Harrison is buried in Co. Louth and his Great-Grand Daughter is the wife of Rev. Alan McMillan (Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland - Belfast).

The congregation of Roscommon was organised in 1867 and united with Creggs in 1873. Its first minister was **Rev. William Smyth** who had been born in Saintfield, and was licensed by the Connaught Presbytery. He had worked with the Belfast mission and had been ordained in Australia. He was installed on 5 August, 1873. He resigned from here on 2 November, 1880 when called to Loughgall.<sup>31</sup>

During his ministry at Roscommon, Rev. William Smyth baptised eight children between the years 1874 - 1880. <sup>32</sup> (see appendix page 3)

On 11 November, 1880, Rev. William Smyth was installed as minister by the Armagh Presbytery of Loughgall. He retired on 2 September, 1902 and died on 9 December, 1909 and he was described as “an earnest preacher of the Word and a man of sincere piety”.<sup>33</sup>

**Rev. Alexander Ferguson** of Corboy was the next man to minister at Roscommon and was installed on 21 June 1881. His stay was the shortest of all for he resigned on the 4 April, 1882, on being called to Kilkinamurry.<sup>34</sup> During his stay he baptised one child in the year 1881.<sup>35</sup> (see appendix page 3)

Mr. Alexander Ferguson (licentiate of the General Assembly) was ordained on 23 May, 1853 and was called to Tyrone’s Ditches which was an Original Secession congregation. On 14 August, 1860 he returned to the jurisdiction of the General Assembly. <sup>36</sup>

On the 31 December, 1860 Rev. Alexander Ferguson was called to Corboy.<sup>37</sup> After his period at Roscommon he became minister at Kilkinamurry and was installed on 25 April, 1882. On 22 August, 1890 he died. <sup>38</sup>

**Mr. Joseph McCorkell** was the next choice of minister for Roscommon and was ordained on 1 August, 1882. He resigned on 18 February, 1895 to work in Merville.<sup>39</sup> During his term at Roscommon he baptised thirty-five children, between 1882 - 1895.<sup>40</sup>, the most baptisms performed by any Reverend in Roscommon Church. Rev. McCorkell carried out his first baptism at the Church on the 13th August 1882 and last on the 5th May 1895 (see appendix pages 3-4).

Rev McCorkell is listed in Slater’s Directory of Ireland, 1894, as living/working in Roscommon Town;

McCORKILL Rev. Jos (Presbyterian), the Manse.<sup>41</sup>

After thirteen years in Creggs and Roscommon, Rev. Joseph McCorkell was installed in Merville on 26 February, 1895. He retired on 31 May, 1939 and died at Galashiels on 5 May, 1944, and was buried at Merville.<sup>42</sup>

On the 5 May 1889, Rev. **Thomas Henry Burkitt** baptised Mary Isabel MacCorkell, daughter of Rev. Joseph MacCorkell.<sup>43</sup> (see appendix page 4)

Rev. Thomas Henry Burkitt served as a missionary in the southern Highlands of Donegal for seventeen years and was installed in Athenry on 4 May 1885. During his stay in Athenry an iron church was built; also a manse on the same two acre site on the edge of the town. He retired on 8 October 1917 and died on the 3 November 1922, aged eighty-eight years old.<sup>44</sup>

The **Rev. James Henderson** of Randalstown(2nd) followed and was installed on 1 July, 1895 and remained in Roscommon for thirty years.<sup>45</sup> While serving here he baptised twenty-four children and was the longest serving minister in Roscommon Church.<sup>46</sup> (see appendix pages 5-6) On the 30 April, 1925 he was installed in Athlone, when the congregations united. He was the last reverend of Roscommon Church.<sup>47</sup>

Before he served at Roscommon, Mr. James Henderson was ordained at Randalstown(2nd) on 21 February, 1893 as mentioned above, in 1895 he was called to Roscommon.<sup>48</sup>

On 30 April, 1925 Rev. James Henderson was installed at Athlone and he retired on 10 July, 1938 and lived for another seventeen years until the 16 February, 1955.<sup>49</sup>

The **Rev. Robert (Robin) Alan Francis Wilson** of 2nd Ballybay and Rockcorry was called to become minister of Ballinasloe, Athlone and Roscommon. He was installed on 25th November 1938 and resigned on 23 December 1943 when he became an R.A.F. Chaplain. He was the last minister resident in Athlone.<sup>50</sup>

Mr. Robert Alan Francis Wilson (son of the Rev. Francis Wilson of 2nd and 3rd Ballynahinch) was ordained at Ballybay(2nd) on 13 December 1934.<sup>51</sup>

Rockcorry congregation became a stated supply of Ballybay(2nd) on 1 January 1925, and remained so during Rev. Robert Alan Francis Wilson's ministry (1934-38).<sup>52</sup>

In 1944 Ballinasloe congregation was united with Athlone and Roscommon as a stated supply. **Rev. R.H.Gilmour**, retired minister of Third Portglenore served here from 18 February 1944.<sup>53</sup>

On 10 December, 1961 **Rev. James Ernest MacLarnon** baptised Alan Douglas, this was to be the last baptismal ceremony in Roscommon Church.<sup>54</sup> (see appendix page 6)

Mr. James Ernest MacLarnon, was ordained minister to Ahoghill(Trinity) on 9 April, 1923 and resigned on 2 September, 1930 on becoming an agent of the Sabbath School Society.<sup>55</sup>

Rev. James Ernest MacLarnon then became Minister at Corboy on the 3 May 1934. Corboy united with Tully. He remained in Corboy for thirty-eight years active service, retiring on 31 May, 1972. He went to live in England where he died on 7 May 1976.<sup>56</sup>

## CONGREGATION RECORDS

The Presbyterian Congregation of Roscommon began to form in the early 1860's, and their church was opened in 1865 and the congregation was recognised in 1867.<sup>57</sup> In 1870 there was only twelve families and by 1904 this figure had reduced to five. The congregation had disappeared by about 1970.<sup>58</sup> Today the only family still existing, are descendants of the Haggart family, located in the Mote Park area, just outside of town!

In 1819 the Presbyterian Ministers were required by their church to register baptisms and marriages, but this only became good practice in 1830. In 1864 an Act stated that all births, deaths and marriages in Ireland were to be registered by the state.<sup>4</sup> In 1869, after the passing of the Church Disestablishment Act, the Church of Ireland was no longer the official Church of the state and no denomination was to be shown preferential treatment.<sup>60</sup>

Between 1868 - 1961 there were seventy-four baptisms in Roscommon Presbyterian Church, carried out by eight different Reverends. Thirty families had children baptised here and fifty-six of the baptisms were from just twelve families. There was only one set of twins (Lowery- 21.5.1913). It appears from the baptismal records, that on the 16 April 1876 the child of William Kiddie and Jessie McSkimming, baptised by Rev. William Smyth, was christened 'William Smyth' instead of William Kiddie by error.<sup>61</sup> (see appendix pages 2-6)

Census records are a very useful source of information for establishing the whereabouts or existence of members of the congregation. In the following records for Roscommon Town, some of the Presbyterian congregation are listed;

### Slater's Directory of Ireland 1894

WATT Thomas, plumber, Abbey Street.<sup>62</sup>

### 1901 Census for Roscommon parish

20. WATT -Thomas(plumber) and Eleanor, William, Margaret,  
Eleanor, Ivy, Violet and Luke Morgan.  
(Abbey Street Lower - Ballypheason)<sup>63</sup>

*Luke Morgan residing in house, not part of family?*

*There is no mention of Oswald Macpherson born 30.9.1895., he died at a very young age two and half years old and would be buried in St. Coman's Old Graveyard in town.<sup>64</sup>*

### 1911 Census for Roscommon parish

8. WATT - Thomas(plumber), and Barbara William, Violet, Ivy P, Eleanor, Henry Hitchins and John Mulhall. (Abbey Street Lower - Ballypheason).<sup>65</sup>

*The Watts have moved from No. 20 Abbey Street Lower to No. 8 Abbey St. Lower .*

*Margaret Watt is not listed as living at the house anymore (c.1901)? She would be about 23 or 24 years old, possibly married?*

*Henry Hitchins and John Mulhall are residing at the house, they are not family?*

### Roscommon Electors List 1932

Abbey Street. Watt, Violet, William, Barbara, Thomas.<sup>66</sup>

*Eleanor and Ivy are no longer listed as living at the house, probably married or working else-where in the country or abroad?. Eleanor would be about 42 or 43 years old and Ivy would be about 39 or 40 years old.*

### 1901 Census for Roscommon parish

**Mote Demesne** - HAGGART - Alexander (gamekeeper). and Margaret, William, Elizabeth, James, Isabella, Margaret, Robert, Jane, Alan\*\*, Alice and Kathleen, <sup>67</sup>

*There is no listing for Anne Haggart born 8.6.1897?, she would be about 3 or 4 years old at the time of the Census!, possibly died young?*

*Kathleen is probably Cathorina as written on the Baptismal Records of the Church!*

### 1911 Census for Roscommon Parish

**Mote Demesne** - HAGGART – Alexander (gamekeeper), and Margaret, James, Margaret, Robert, Alan, Alice, Kathleen, Barbara, Edward.<sup>68</sup>

*Barbara and Edward Haggart were born since the last census!*

*William Haggart is not listed at the house; he would be about 23 or 24 years old!*

*Isabella Haggart is not listed at the house; she would be about 19 or 20 years old!*

*Jane Haggart is not listed at the house; she would be about 15 or 16 years old!*

## Roscommon Electors List 1932

Haggard Alexander, Alexandra, Ned, Margaret, Kathleen.<sup>69</sup>

*Alexandra is probably young Alexander Watt?*

***James, Alan, Alice, Barbara and Edward are not listed at the house!***

*James would be about 41 or 42 years old!*

*Alan would be about 35 or 36 years old!*

*Alice would be about 32 or 33 years old!*

*Barbara would be about 29 or 30 years old!*

*Edward would be about 27 or 28 years old!*

There does not appear to be any burial records for Roscommon Presbyterian Church, probably because there was no graveyard attached to the church, but in St. Coman's Church (Church of Ireland), the following records revealed details of burials of some of the Presbyterian congregation ;<sup>70</sup>

### Roscommon Burials (17.3.1882 - 25.9.1985)

Name	Abode	When Buried	Age	By whom
Barbara Eleanor Watt	Court Street Roscommon	29.1.1940. (new cemetery)	80	TS Humphreys
Watt Eleanor	Court Street Roscommon	10.3.1972.	82	DW Graham (Douglas Wrixon)
Violet Watt	Roscommon	16.4.1974.	71	DW Graham

(see appendix pages 7-9)

The following death records were compiled by a FAS scheme on St. Coman's Old Graveyard in Roscommon Town and included Presbyterian deaths;<sup>71</sup>

Date	Surname	Christian	Age	Where died
14.2.1887	Frazer	William	13 mths	Abbey St
4.11.1897.	Gilmour	John. AF.	N.B.	Roscommon
29.10.1896	James	George	44	The Villa, Ros
24.1.1898.	Watt	Osmond M	2.5	Abbey Street

### Kilteevan Deaths (1864-1900)

Date	Surname	Christian	Age	Where died
3.8.1898.	Crosbie	John	65	Emoe



**Old Protestant Graveyard, Roscommon.**

**JAMES**

In loving memory of

Katie

The beloved wife of George James

who entered into rest

on the 8th of June 1884 aged 27 years

Though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil for thou art with me thy rod and thy staff.  
Thy comfort me. Psalm 23

*It is not certain this is the Katie James of the Roscommon Presbyterian  
Congregation?*

*The Presbyterian Katie did marry a George James, and there is a George James  
buried in the Graveyard (Old Protestant) according to the Library records?*

## JAMES

George James

Born Sept. 1st 1852, died Oct. 29th 1896

Mark the perfect man and behold the upright

For the end of that man is peace.

Psalm 37-37

It is not certain if the George James mentioned above is that of the Roscommon Presbyterian Congregation? He is buried in St Coman's Graveyard (Old) either beside or with his wife Katie James (details mentioned before)?

Robert Haggart - Mote Park, was a Private in the Northumberland Fuseliers and died from injuries inflicted in World War I, he is buried in St. Coman's (new) Graveyard.

(see appendix pages 7-11)

There appears to be no records of marriages in Roscommon Presbytery Church but there are two entries in the local St. Coman's Church of Ireland; Henry Mears (Marrs) & Emma Elizabeth Jones (see appendix pages 12) and James Jackson & Matilda Purdue (see appendix pages 13).

## CONCLUSION

The research carried out so far in this local history project, is only the tip of the iceberg, what had started out at researching any history on the Roscommon Presbyterian Church has developed into genealogy research. This piece of local history in print only contains the basic findings that have been compiled. This work will be ongoing to build up a bigger picture of the Presbyterian Church's history and its links with the ancestors of its past congregation.

Obtaining the baptismal records for the Church, suddenly created a group (congregation) of people whose life's were linked with the building (Museum/Tourist Office). It is possible to put faces to these names, build up a history on these people; who they were, where they lived, their trade, any aspect of their life's, and you could say their "after life", as regards their family and descendants. With these people traced they could be approached for further information and eventually invited to the Museum, to see their history, see their Church which in-turn may help the survival of the Museum's future, the Church's future!

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## APPENDICES

- p1 1861 Census (church records)
- p2 Rev. J.Orr Scott & Rev. Dunlop Moore
- p3 Presbyterian Church in Ireland - Baptismal Register for Roscommon Church (1861-1961) copy.
- P8-10 Watt Family Graves (photos) - St. Coman's (new) Graveyard, Athlone Rd, Roscommon.
- P8-12 Haggart Family Graves (photos) - St. Coman's (new) Graveyard, Athlone Rd, Roscommon.
- p13 Henry Mears & Emma Elizabeth Jones Marriage Registration.
- p14 James Jackson & Maltilda Purdue Marriage Registration



BANBRIDGE:  
Bannside: “*The second Minister was **Rev. James Scott**, formerly minister of Glenavy. He was installed on 12 Oct 1880, had a long ministry and died on 10 Mar 1918.* <sup>72</sup>

GLENARM: “***Mr. James Scott** (lic Newry) was ordained as Mr. Waddell’s successor on 28 Sep. 1869 and resigned on call to Banbridge on 21 Sep. 1880.* <sup>73</sup>

\* (The above James Scott is the closest findings/records found for **Rev. J. Orr. Scott** )

BELTURBET: “***Mr. David Dunlop** (lic. Route) was ordained on 28 Feb. 1888. He was however, suspended from ministerial office on 27 Mar. 1888* <sup>74</sup>

TULLY: “*The Rev. Mr. Edmonds was followed by **Mr. William Moore** (lic. Belfast) who was ordained on 3 Nov. 1867, and who was appointed in Dec. 1869 by the Board of Missions to Spain. He resigned his missionary post in 1874, was installed in Tully a second time on 25 May 1874, and resigned in 1879 when appointed to Jervis St. Mission in Dublin.*” <sup>75</sup>

\* (The above persons are the only listings that may represent **Rev. Dunlop Moore** who carried out a baptismal ceremony in **Roscommon Church** on the **19.1.1868.**)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
MARGARET WATT  
(DAISY)  
BORN 28th MAY 1887  
ENTERED INTO HER REST  
15th APRIL 1925

ALSO HER FATHER

THOMAS HARDIE WATT  
DIED APRIL 29 1936  
AGE 77 YEARS

ALSO HER MOTHER

BARBERA ELEANOR WATT  
DIED JANUARY 26 1940  
AGED 80 YEARS

AND THEIR ELDEST SON

WILLIAM F.C. WATT  
DIED OCTOBER 25 1957  
AGED 71 YEARS

UNDERNEATH ARE THE  
EVERLASTING ARMS

DEUT XXX III VERSC XXVII

\*\*\*\*\*

ELEANOR WATT  
DIED 8 MARCH 1972  
AGED 81 YEARS

VIOLET WATT  
DIED 14 APRIL 1974  
AGED 73 YEARS

\*\*\*\*\*

*Margaret Watt (Daisy) was 37 years old when she died!*

*Thomas Hardie Watt was born around 1859!*

*Barbara Eleanor Watt was born around 1860!*

*Eleanor Watt was born on 27.4.1889 and died on the 8.3.1972, this makes her 82 years old when she died, not 81 years as engraved on the tombstone!*

*Violet Watt was born 18.6.1899 and died 14.4.1994, this makes her 74 years old when she died not 73 as engraved on her tombstone.*

IN MEMORY OF

ALEXANDER HAGGART  
DIED 7 JULY 1938, AGED 84 YEARS

HIS WIFE MARGARET  
DIED 19 NOVEMBER 1933, AGED 67 YEARS

THEIR DAUGHTER ISABELLE  
DIED 2 MAY 1938, AGED 44 YEARS

THEIR SON BOB  
KILLED IN FRANCE 1915, AGED 21 YEARS

DAUGHTER  
JEAN(PAT) DIED 10 SEPTEMBER 1984  
AGED 89 YEARS

CATHERINE (KITTY)  
DIED 19 JANUARY 1988 AGED 88 YEARS

HAGGART

\*\*\*\*\*

IN MEMORY OF  
LUKE O CONNOR  
DIED 24 MAY 1976

HIS WIFE  
BARBARA NEE HAGGART  
DIED 11 FEBRUARY 1992  
R.I.P.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Isabelle Haggart* was born 23.11.1891 and died on the 25.1938, this makes her 46 years old not 44 years old as engraved on the tombstone!

*Catherine (Catharina) "Kitty" Haggart* was born 30.3.1900 and died on the 19.1.1988, this makes her 87 years old not 88 years old as engraved on the tombstone!

*Barbara O'Connor (nee Haggart)* was 89 years old when she died!

